

1.13.2022 Mining Forum Opening Statement

Rep. Pete Stauber

Thank you to Ranking Member Westerman and Chairman Newhouse for working with me to put together this forum today. It truly means a lot, that both the House Natural Resources Committee and the Congressional Western Caucus understand and elevate a project so crucial to my district, Minnesota, and the nation.

And thank you to the panelists, including those who traveled from Minnesota today. Although it's a cold day by DC standards, these folks are practically taking a beach vacation compared to temperatures back home.

For those that don't know, the Twin Metals project is a proposed mining project on a combination of federal, state, and private land in my district.

It's in a region known as the Iron Range, as this part of Minnesota has been supplying America with the iron it needs for 130 years.

In addition to iron, northern Minnesota has massive reserves of metals, called the Duluth Complex, containing 95% of America's nickel, 88% of America's cobalt, and more than one-third of its copper.

Twin Metals is a modern, 21st century mining project, and proposes to produce those minerals from their part of the Duluth Complex. It will be built with union labor.

The mining will be completely underground, with little surface disturbance, using electric mining vehicles. The project plans to store its waste with the modern dry-stack method, lauded by many left-wing groups.

It's located in the Superior National Forest, where mining is a desired condition per the forest plan, well outside the Boundary Waters Canoe Area and outside the no-mining buffer zone encircling the BWCA.

The minerals produced are crucial for wind, solar, EVs, national security, iPhones, computers, and limitless other applications.

Our country needs these minerals. For cobalt, we are currently 76% import reliant. And who is the top source of cobalt in the world?

The Congo, infamous for Chinese-owned mines exploiting children to toil barefoot and barehanded, picking valuable cobalt out of narrow tunnels in the ground, and getting beaten by Chinese-paid guards when they don't comply or dare attend school.

Our EV's, windmills, solar panels, iPhones, and more are built with this cobalt.

Think about that.

Our everyday devices and the agenda of the Biden Administration is reliant on child-mined cobalt.

So, presumably, Democrats and the Biden Administration should support a modern, underground mine to onshore our mineral supplies in an environmentally friendly manner.

During campaigns? Yes.

In fact, the Biden campaign announced in October of 2020 that they plan to support domestic production.

But after Biden took office, his White House announced they plan to look abroad for minerals. And they started this campaign against my district, against union workers, and against American national security with the Twin Metals project.

Nearly one year to the day after his campaign announced support for domestic minerals, in October 2021, Joe Biden's Administration moved to ban the Twin Metals project by restarting a politically driven "study," the first of its kind anywhere, that President Trump rightfully stopped.

Let me be clear: this is a policy decision by a Democrat Administration.

After promising Americans domestic mining during the campaign, Joe Biden and his Administration did a 180-degree turn, opting to get cobalt from child miners instead of American workers just to appease his radical, activist base.

And he has plenty of allies in Congress. My colleague from St. Paul introduced legislation that would enshrine this mining ban in statute, and tacked poison pills onto spending bills that would arbitrarily ban mining in my district outright.

So that's why we're here today.

Because we have *OUR* allies right here, in the form of my fellow members of Congress, who turned out to support my district and my constituents, and our panel of experts from across the nation.

So, thank you, to you all. I look forward to the discussion.

And now, I'd like to introduce the witnesses from Minnesota at the panel today.

Starting with our visiting delegation from Minnesota, St. Louis County Commissioner Mike Jugovich. A former colleague of mine from the Board, Commissioner Jugovich represents a large portion of the Iron Range.

Next, we have Jason George, the Business Manager of the International Union of Operating Engineers, Local 49. Jason and his membership provide a voice from Minnesota's strong labor community, discussing what the Twin Metals project will mean for union jobs.

We also have Brian Hanson, chair of Jobs for Minnesotans, an organization from the Northland comprised of the business community, labor community, local governments and more.

And to round out the Minnesota contingency, we welcome Julie Padilla, of Twin Metals. Julie's knowledge of the project, the land, and the resource are second to none.

With that, I will yield back to Mr. Westerman.